



RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Members of the Resources and General Services Committee
are summoned to attend a Meeting at **7pm** on

Wednesday, 11 January 2023

at Loughton Town Council, Council Chamber, 1 Buckingham Court,
Rectory Lane, Loughton IG10 2QZ

to transact the business as shown in the agenda.

Mark Squire
Town Clerk
4 January 2023

Councillor J Jennings (Chairman)
Councillor M Owen (Vice Chairman)

Councillors
R Brookes
S Murray

B Cohen
M Stubbings

W Kauffman

Note to Councillors:
If you are unable to attend the meeting,
please phone your apologies to the office on 020 8508 4200.

A G E N D A

- 1 Apologies for absence**
To RECEIVE any apologies for absence.
- 2 Declarations of Interest**
Councillors to declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any items on the agenda.
- 3 Confirmation of Minutes**
To CONFIRM the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2022, amended from those circulated to read at min no RG166:

"Members AGREED to submit the draft response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, as presented".
- 4 Public Representations**
To hear any representations from members of the public who have registered a request to address the Committee in accordance with no 5, Appendix C, of the Standing Orders.
- 5 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report**
To report (for discussion only) on any further significant information / matters that may be of interest to Committee members
- 6 Notification of external auditor appointment for 2022-23 to 2026-27**
The SAAA (Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments), have announced following the conclusion of its procurement process, the appointed auditor for the 5-year period from 2022-23 – 2026-27 is PKF Littlejohn LLP (PKF Littlejohn LLP have also been the current external auditor for the past 5 years).

To receive and note
- 7 Policies Review**
Members are asked to review / NOTE the following and AGREE if they wish 'to pass a resolution to sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge'. The Town Clerk will provide further background information.

Civility and Respect Pledge
 - a. See page 3
 - b. Local Government (Disqualification) Act 2022 change April 22**
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/17/enacted?fbclid=IwAR3p2Erat_kLs3hBf8u66vColZw7t9EQVAKsL89K24SmtYSSJ5smNEhdBA
- 8 Internal Financial Check**
To NOTE that Councillor Murray visited the office on the 15 December 2022 and undertook a financial check on the Purchase Invoices and Cheques from the beginning of the 2022/23 financial year to date.

- 9 Financial Assistance Working Group**
The Committee is asked to confirm the three members of this working group to continue in 2023/24 to consider the grant applications. Currently Councillor J Jennings, M Owen, and S Murray.
- 10 Council-wide Priorities 2023/24**
The Committee are asked to NOTE the report on pages 4-7. NB the pages may need to be revisited after the Estimates discussions.
- 11 Considerations for 2023/24 Estimates following the Strategy & Staffing Group meeting of 19.12.22**
Members to note salient points and recommendations from this meeting. See report on pages 8-9.
- 12 Estimates for 2023/24**
To review the Committees' budgets for the forthcoming financial year and agree a recommendation for the level of Precept for 2023/24 to be made to the meeting of the Council to be held on Tuesday 24 January 2023. See report on pages 10-11 and Appendix 1.

Mark Squire
TOWN CLERK
4 January 2023

**Agenda Item 7a
Civility and Respect Pledge**

Civility and Respect Pledge suggested agenda item:

‘To pass a resolution to sign up to the civility and respect pledge’

Definition of Civility and Respect
<p>Civility means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word.</p> <p>Examples of ways in which you can show respect are by listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people’s feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks, and being kind.</p>

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), and One Voice Wales (OVW), believe now is the time to put civility and respect at the top of the agenda and start a culture change for the local council sector.

By our council signing up to the civility and respect pledge we are demonstrating that our council is committed to treating councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.

Signing up is a simple process, which requires councils to register and agree to the following statements:

Statement	Tick to agree
Our council has agreed that it will treat all councillors, clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.	
Our council has committed to training councillors and staff.	
Our council has signed up to Code of Conduct for councillors	
Our council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy.	
Our council will commit to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise.	
Our council will commit to calling out bullying and harassment when it happens.	
Our council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council e.g., via the Local Council Award Scheme	
Our council supports the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.	

Agenda Item 10
Council-Wide Priorities

OVERALL PRIORITIES 2023/24		
Ranking	Committee	Activity
1	Recreation	Roding Valley Recreation Ground (RVRG) Playground
2	Environment & Heritage	Loughton Day
3	Recreation	Jessel Green Day
4	Planning & Licensing	Local Plan modifications
5	Resources & General Services	Transfer to electronic banking

PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE – Priorities 2023/24

Priority	Main Function	Greater Detail (current position)
	Current activities	
High	Local Plan	Further deliberations
High	Planning and Licensing	Responding to applications
High	All other matters within the committee's	terms of reference
Medium	Design Award Scheme	Annual award presentation

RECREATION COMMITTEE – Priorities 2023/24

Current Priority	Main Function	Greater Detail (current position)
	Current Activities	
1	Solar energy installations for Council buildings	Further research and budgetary allowance
2	RVRG Playground	To be completed Spring 2023
3	Other playgrounds	New works/upgrading after no 2
4	RVRG path maintenance	Including the diverted path by Charlie Moules Bridge – ongoing with EFDC
5	RVRG	Improvements to changing rooms exterior & surrounding area
6	Land adjacent to Willingale Road Allotment	Use as a nature reserve/community orchard. Some clearance and environmental studies undertaken
7	Hillyfields litter bins	Working with EFDC
8	Hillyfields landscaping / new gate	Specifications and costings
9	Roding Valley Recreation Ground	Registration as a “Field in Trust”
10	Jessel Green Day	Preparation and organisation

11	Byelaws for Town Council land	To be researched
High	Running the committee	Agenda, reports, research, minutes, finance, admin
High	Kingsley and Murray Halls	Bookings, admin, finance, maintenance and works
High	Open spaces including the Memorial Garden in Roding Road	Maintenance
High	Willingale Road Playing Field and Roding Valley Recreation Ground	Football lettings, maintenance and works
High	Playgrounds / outdoor gyms	Maintenance
High	Responding to consultations	Variable
High	Any other matters within the committee's terms of reference	As detailed in the Standing Orders
High	Provision of Public Access Defibrillators	Maintenance

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE COMMITTEE – Priorities 2023/24

Current Priority	Main Function	Greater Detail/Current Position
	Current activities	
High	Loughton Day / Heritage Open Days	September events + heritage trail/leaflets - 2023
High	Loughton Cemetery Wall	To commence
High	Registration of Village Greens	Applications submitted to ECC
High	Conservation Areas / areas of local landscape merit	Monitor proposals submitted to EFDC Local List review TBC
High	Liaison with City of London Corporation	All aspects re Epping Forest including route signage
Medium	Lady Whittaker's Mead	Development of a new cemetery
Medium	Flower baskets	Extension to north part of Loughton
Medium	Heritage streetlights**	On LHP action list
	On-going activities	
High	Running the committee	Agenda, reports, research, minutes, finance, admin
High	Community Lavatory scheme	Awaiting approaches to businesses
High	Cemetery (Church Lane)	Burials, administration, maintenance, Rules and Regulations review
High	War memorials	Inspect and maintain
High	Heritage plaques, drinking fountain, seats and other street furniture; Lopping Hall clock	Installation and maintenance
High	Allotments	Lettings, licences, administration
High	Christmas lights (Kings Green, The Broadway and High Road)	Installation, inspections and maintenance

High	Christmas Window Competitions	Admin and arrangements
High	Alleyway nameplates	Site surveys, permissions, purchase and installation
High	Winter salt bag partnership	Facilitating the ECC scheme Replacement of existing grit bins
High	Responding to consultations	Variable
High	Any other matters within the Committee's terms of reference	

Resources and General Services -- Priorities 2023/24

Priority	Main Function	Greater Detail/Current Position
	Current activities	
High	Transfer to Electronic Banking	Transfer to unity Bank; amalgamating / reducing current banking arrangements
Medium	King Charles Coronation	Celebrations for May 2023
Medium	Local Council Awards	To commence in stages in 2023
Low	Council structure	Continuing reviews
	On-going activities	
High	Seeking external funding sources	Targeted action
High	Banking arrangements and investments	Kept under review
High	Running the Committee	
High	Admin for whole council	
High	Council and committee agendas and minutes	
High	All council finances, end of year accounts, audit etc	
High	Management of Buckingham Crt	
High	Personnel and employment matters, staff management	Staff Handbook reviews as required
High	IT and office equipment	
High	Civic matters	Civic Celebrations incl Citizenship Awards
High	Annual Report	Preparation and printing
High	Newsletter	Editorial, printing and distribution
High	Noticeboards	Maintenance and installation
High	Publicity and website	
High	Annual Town Meeting	Arrangements and admin
High	Christmas Card competition	Arrangements and admin
High	Emergency Plan	Amendments and circulation
High	Financial Assistance Scheme	Admin and finance
High	New legislative requirements	
High	Policy reviews	On-going
High	Responding to consultations	Variable

High	Contract reviews	On-going
High	Training strategy	Annual review
High	Any other matters within the Committee's terms of reference	
Low	Community Forum	Arrangements and admin

Agenda Item 11

Considerations for 2023/24 Estimates following the Strategy & Staffing Group meeting of 19.12.22

Strategy and Staff Group (SSG)

Salient points from the Strategy and Staff Group (SSG meeting) held on 19 December 2022.

A. Economic Environment

The Town Clerk reiterated the current and unprecedented difficult economic environment, including the cost of living crisis, utility's costs, uncertainty for the future and disenfranchisement from other tiers of Local Government . The Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) £4.5m deficit and potential further redundancies was cited as examples). In the future, Loughton Town Council (LTC) would need to

- think more laterally 'outside the box,
- act more as a 'stand-alone' business,
- change level of expectations in some areas,
- make some more radical changes now, to ensure less financial strain further down the line,
- focus on some areas of Council activity which may longer be sustainable / value for local residents.

B. Year End 2023

LTC could be facing a deficit at the end of March 2023 and a large proportion of Earmarked Funds would be used up, although LTC does have healthy General Reserves. The purchase/ leasing of a new van is also an immediate priority. Internal measures would be taken to freeze further expenditure during the remaining three months of the financial year, including

- No staff overtime payments (unless contractual), though staff tend to take the majority of time via 'toil' anyway.'
- No further training (members and staff) until the next financial year. All training requests to date have been taken up already and there are no obvious and immediate training needs.
- Veto of any further expenses unless they are absolutely necessary.

C. Estimates 2023 /2024

There was scope for some very necessary, radical and minor changes needed for the following financial year's budget, although it was appreciated that further (more dramatic savings) may be necessary in the future

Proposals made by Officers and added to by Members: -

- A number of budget lines were scaled back.
- Small 'Contingency' and other minor budget lines removed.
- Once a budget limit has been reached, no further funds for this particular category would be available until the following budget year Budget overspends would not be 'vired' from another budget categories (except in exceptional circumstances)
- Removal of costly monthly contractual external Human Resources (HR) fees once the contract expires in summer of 2023. Any further HR advice would have to be obtained on an ad hoc basis.
- 'Think Loughton' newsletter to be reduced by 1 to 3 a year. The consensus was that a hardcopy would still need to be posted, to ensure residents who do not use the internet would not be left out. *

- No agendas would now be posted out to save postage costs but would be available for collection.
- Jessel Green and Loughton Day events could be alternated every other year. It was felt that Jessel Green day should continue to run annually. To compensate and
- make the events cost neutral, a sponsor should be sought for these Town Council events.
- Increase all hire fees by 10%, with the exception of allotment fees, where the new charges have already been published.
- Deferment of tree survey
- Deferment of memorial testing
- Deferment of floor cleaning at Murray Hall
- Investigate use of energy efficient bulbs at Buckingham Court
- During the year, investigate 'grass cutting' and football maintenance costs, to see if some economies can be made Outsourcing? A meeting with EFDC / Qualis?

On Earmarked Reserves (EMR), general consensus to

- return 'Roding Valley Recreation Ground' fund to General Reserves (GR) to reduce deficit / assist fund a new van.
- £40k towards new Playground at Newmans Lane
- Reduce Charles Moules Bridge EMR by £10k
- Remove Street Furniture EMR to reduce GR deficit / fund new van
- Remove Lady Whittakers Mead Fund EMR to return to GR
- Surplus Grant Funds during the year to be returned to GR

Members AGREED that following these changes a precept request increase of under 10% (from the preceding year) should be achievable and would be acceptable to SSG members. The 23/24 budget would be discussed further at the Resources and General Services meeting on 11 January 2023.

MS 29.12.22

*Subsequently a reduction in publication numbers has not proved practical or cost effective

Agenda Item 12

Estimates for 2023/24

1 Budget Review

All the Committees have now considered their draft budgets for 2023/24 and provided their estimates for consideration by this Committee.

* See Appendix 1

For information, the latest Retail Price Index (RPI) figure is 13.7% as of November 2022, and the latest Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) 10.7% as of November 2022.

2 Service Recharges

These are internal transfers reflecting the cost of running each committee and do not affect the total budgeted expenditure. They are included in the spreadsheet budget figures for 2023/24 provided in the reports. Once the budget has been reviewed, the service recharge for each committee will be calculated and included in the figures for presentation to the Council.

3 Tax Base

The tax base which will be used to calculate the 2023/24 Band D Council Tax for Loughton Town Council as confirmed by Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) is 12,667.9* (12,732.8 in 22/23). This is the figure that when divided into the precept gives the Band D annual amount per household. Effectively this means that the base precept level available to the Town Council is slightly increased from last year.

*Note - EFDC re-stated tax base – notification received 15.12.22.

EFDC explains the Tax Base as follows: -

Council Tax Base - This is the number of Band D equivalent dwellings in a local authority area. To calculate the tax base for an area, the number of dwellings in each council tax band shown on the Valuation List is reduced to take account of discounts and exemptions. The resulting figure for each band is then multiplied by its proportion relative to Band D (from 6/9 for Band A to 18/9 for Band H) and the total across all eight bands is calculated. An adjustment is then made for the collection rate. The tax base figure that is used by the billing authority when it sets its council tax uses an adjustment for the collection rate, the actual discount for second homes and any premium applicable to empty homes.

4 Committees' Estimates

The summary of the Committees' estimates taking into account each Committee's requests is as follows:

Committee	Income	Expenditure
	£	£
Resources and General Services	2,000	575,121
Environment and Heritage	19,345	104,778
Recreation	151,862	482,972
Planning and Licensing	0	200
	173,207	1,163,071
Interest	7000	
Increase / Decrease in Earmarked Reserves		
Resources & General Services		-9,624
Environment & Heritage		-13,000
Recreation		-55,940
Planning and Licensing		0
Total	180,207	1,084,507
Net requirement	904,300	71.39
Final Net Requirement	904,300	

The Earmarked Funds summary is shown on Appendix 1 page 11. An overall net reduction in Earmarked Funds of £78,564 is recorded.

This would result in a 9.56% increase on the Band D charge from £65.16 to £71.39.

The Committee is asked to consider the options, and agree

- I. If and where the savings are to be made; and/or
- II. which new items of expenditure are to be included in the budget; and
- III. the estimates

This will provide a **RECOMMENDATION of the level of precept for 2023/2024** to be made to the meeting of the Council on 24 January 2023.

5 Public Loans Outstanding's

For information, please see below for details of the current status of public loans outstanding.

Summary of outstanding loans to Council				
Figures refer to capital balance outstanding				
Purpose		Opening balance	Closing balance 31.12.22	End date of loan
			2022	
Buckingham Court	19.1.01	400,000	101,121.83	19.01.26
Community Centre (1)	28.3.02	500,000	158,583.96	28.03.27
Community Centre (2)	28.6.02	500,000	169,233.16	28.06.27
Total		1,400,000	428,938.95	